

GALATIANS - SERMON 6
GALATIANS 1 & 2 — PAUL'S POST CONVERSION ACTIVITY
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INTRODUCTION:

Read Galatians 1:15 - 2:10

The attack of the Judaizers was two-fold. First they sought to undermine the authority of Paul as an apostle. Secondly, they will amend and distort the gospel of grace preached by Paul by recommending the necessity of becoming a Jew first before becoming a Christian. In Galatians 1 Paul must deal with the first attack which is against his apostleship, Galatian 1:1, 11 & 12. Paul asserts that he received his appointment to office as well as the gospel he preached directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. In support of his authority Paul highlights the record of his relationship and dealings with the other apostles. This record begins in Galatians 1:13-16, dealing with his conversion.

Next Paul describes his post conversion activity, Galatians 1:17 - 2:10.

OUTLINE:

- I PAUL WAS NOT A DISCIPLE OF THE APOSTLES BECAUSE HE WAS NOT INSTRUCTED BY THEM.
- II PAUL WAS NOT A DISCIPLE OF THE APOSTLES BECAUSE HE WAS RECEIVED AS AN EQUAL BY THE APOSTLES.
- III PAUL WAS NOT A DISCIPLE OF THE APOSTLES BECAUSE HE ENGAGED IN THE CORRECTION OF AN APOSTLE.
- IV TO SUMMARIZE OUR PRESENTATION:
LESSONS TO GLEAN:

- I PAUL WAS NOT A DISCIPLE OF THE APOSTLES BECAUSE HE WAS NOT INSTRUCTED BY THEM, GALATIANS 1:15 - 2:6

If a man is to become a disciple some one else must become that man's teacher. If Paul was a disciple of the apostles, then they were his teacher. Paul will show that he was not a disciple of the other apostles because he did not receive teaching from them.

Paul was not commissioned by another apostle, but rather by Jesus Christ at his conversion (Acts 26:12-18).

"While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send . . ."

Paul was not only saved on the road to Damascus, but he was also commissioned as an apostle.

Galatians 1:16

. . . to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. . .

Paul did not seek counsel or instruction from other men following his conversion, but rather committed himself to divine guidance and divine teaching.

Acts 9:17-20

And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

Paul did not receive instruction from the disciples in Damascus, but rather he straightway began teaching and preaching in their synagogue.

Acts 9:21-22

Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

The period of Paul's initial ministry in Damascus did not last long. Opposition soon arose and Paul was compelled to depart.

Galatians 1:17

. . . nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Paul went out into the desert which is east of Damascus called Arabia. Paul was in the desert for three years (Galatians 1:18). We are not certain what Paul did while in Arabia. We have no record of what he did during that time, though we have the record that he was in Arabia for three years. Arabia was a desert area where there were few inhabitants. It is speculated that during this period Christ appeared to Paul and taught him many things. This parallels the three years Christ spent with the original disciples before His crucifixion. By Paul's own admission he received an abundance of revelation in his life, some of which may have come during this period.

2 Corinthians 12:7

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

As Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1), even so it may have been with Paul.

After the three years in Arabia, Paul returned to Damascus (Galatians 1:17).

Acts 9:23-25

Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.

Between verses 22 and 23 was that three year period which Paul spent in Arabia. Paul was evidently not able to remain long in Damascus the second time either. Preaching in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ provoked the Jews to persecute him to that extent that he had to flee. It is only now that Paul makes his first post-conversion journey into Jerusalem.

Galatians 1:18-20

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

Acts 9:26-29

And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.

Paul again provokes persecution by his preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was only with the apostles for a fifteen day period. During that time he could not have learned all the theology that the Lord has revealed through his epistles.

Paul adds details to this time he spent in Jerusalem

Acts 22:17-21

"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'"

Here we have the re-commissioning of Paul. Like his first commission, it comes from the Lord Jesus Christ personally and not through the apostles.

Galatians 1:21-24

Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God in me.

Leaving Jerusalem Paul preached through *Syria and Cilicia*. Paul did not travel the southern region of Israel, known as Judea. Judea was the area in which the apostles were most active.

Paul was sent into the area north and west of Jerusalem.

Acts 9:30

When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

Paul has now made his way back to his home town of Tarsus. (Acts 23 & Romans 16:7-13)

Evangelistic work in the town of Antioch resulted in a church. Barnabas traveled there and, assessing conditions, determined that there was need of instruction among the believers there. He then traveled to Tarsus to persuade Paul to come and minister in Antioch.

Acts 11:25-26

Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

A brief journey was made to Jerusalem according to Acts 11:29-30 in order to distribute monetary relief to the believers in Jerusalem. Apparently, during this short trip Paul and Barnabas did not see any of the other apostles during that time.

Acts 13 & 14 record the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. It was during this journey that they established churches in southern Galatia. These are the churches to which the epistle is written. After this they return to Antioch to give a report of their journey. It is at this time that the Judaizers infiltrate the Galatian churches.

Acts 15:1-2

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 15 are the record of this journey to and meeting in Jerusalem. In Galatians 2:1 Paul refers to a period of fourteen years from either his first trip to Jerusalem or his conversion. Whichever it is, it does demonstrate that in the first 14-17 years of his Christian life and ministry he had only seen the apostles for a period of 15 days. Paul's trip to the Jerusalem counsel was also in response to direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:2). Having preached for more than 14 years and participated in a

first successful missionary journey, Paul is traveling to meet with the apostles to confer over the gospel message.

In Galatians 2:1-7 we have the record that Paul's fellow apostles reviewed his gospel and found nothing lacking and thereby they supplied nothing to him to supplement or amend his preaching.

Paul was not a disciple of the apostles. This is Paul's first line of argument against the Judaizer's charge that he was not an apostle on a par with the others.

II PAUL WAS NOT A DISCIPLE OF THE APOSTLES BECAUSE HE WAS RECEIVED AS AN EQUAL BY THE APOSTLES.

Galatians 2:7-10

But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

- A The first thing noted here is that the apostles recognized that the gospel had been committed to Paul. And they saw this commission equal to Peter's commission, *as the gospel ...to Peter (vs 7)*.
- B Next they recognized that Paul's work was as effective as Peter's, vs 8, *for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles*. The same level of effect, power, and miracle was found to be in both Peter and Paul's ministries.
- C Thirdly the record also shows that the apostles, having recognized that grace had been given to Paul, extended the hand of fellowship to him, vs 9, *they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship*. Here was a public recognition of equality on the part of the apostles.

The apostles only offered advise (not correction), *that we should remember the poor*. However, this was the very thing Paul was already inclined in that direction.

There was nothing that Paul lacked and needed to receive from the apostles in order to make his ministry and apostleship bonafide.

III PAUL WAS NOT A DISCIPLE OF THE APOSTLES BECAUSE HE ENGAGED IN THE CORRECTION OF AN APOSTLE.

Galatians 2:11-14

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to

Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

The point in Paul's recounting this apostolic rebuke by Paul of Peter is the support his authoritative place as an apostle. It would not be fitting for any one other than an apostle to so rebuke Peter, another apostle. It took an equal to rebuke the Apostle Peter. Peter had fallen into an error and Paul rebuked him. Peter already knew of the inclusion of the Gentiles and the abrogating of the dietary restrictions. He had three times seen the sheet coming down from heaven with all manner of unclean animals accompanied by the voice of God commanding Peter to kill and eat (Acts 10). Peter had forgotten the lesson and instruction of God and Paul corrects him.

It is worthy of noting that Paul publically rebukes Peter at the same level as the error had been broadcast. Peter had publically misrepresented the gospel of grace and so Paul publically corrects him.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

IV TO SUMMARIZE OUR PRESENTATION:

Paul was not a disciple of the apostles because;

- 1 he was not instructed by the apostles
- 2 he was received as an equal by the apostles
- 3 he engaged in the correction of an apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:5

For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.

Paul was able to say that he was an authoritative apostle. He was not inclined or delighted by the prospect of promoting his own cause or case. In 2 Corinthians 12:11 Paul had said that he became a *fool in boasting* . . .but he had to defend his reputation in order to support and defend the gospel of grace under attack.

Why should we care? If Paul is not an apostle we lose half of the New Testament texts.

LESSONS TO GLEAN:

- 1 THE ONLY BASIS FOR TRUE UNITY IS COMMONLY HELD TRUTH. On what basis was the *right hand of fellowship extended*? It was extended because they both held the same message. Doctrine was an essential part and foundation of the unity and fellowship of these Christians. Unity was not constructed upon the reduction of doctrinal content, but upon a sound body of divinity embraced. The Judaizers believed and held to the very basic parts of the Christian religion. Today such would be afforded full fellowship in many congregations, but not so among the apostles. The Judaizers were in error in the details and fine points of their doctrine, but it was sufficient for rebuke and separation. Not only were they not to have the right hand of fellowship extended to them, but they were to be considered *accursed*.

True unity and fellowship is based upon commonly held truth.

- 2 DOCTRINAL DISPUTES ARE TO BE SETTLED BY APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY. What was the final authority in the matter of circumcision? It was the letter produced by the apostles at the Jerusalem Council. To whom do we appeal since we do not have living apostles among us? Roman Catholics and Mormons err here in portraying the existence of new apostles in our day. Apostles are to have been personally appointed by Jesus Christ and personally taught by Jesus Christ. Such is not the case today.

But we do have apostles to whom we can appeal! It is the Word of God, the New Testament in particular. These are the divinely preserved judgments of the apostles preserved for us as the divine will revealed to us. We can appeal to the apostles by going to the Word of God with our disputes.

We are commanded to appeal to the law and the prophets and if the message or teacher's message does not measure up to that it is because there is no light in them

Isaiah 8:20

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

- 3 OUR EXAMPLES HAVE PROFOUND INFLUENCES UPON OTHERS. In Galatians 2 we find Barnabas influenced adversely by Peter's example. To whatever extent you have authority or responsibility among believers and in the church, the greater the effect of your example. It is imperative that your behavior support the Word of God. Our sins and errors have profound and devastating effects upon others.

Romans 14:7

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

- 4 WE NEED TO HAVE A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AND FREEDOM FROM A SPIRIT OF ENVY AND COMPETITION TOWARDS THOSE WHO ARE ADVANCED IN THE FAITH OR TOWARDS THE SUCCESSES OF OTHER PEOPLE IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY. When the apostles saw the great success of Paul among the Gentiles they were not envious and jealous, but they encouraged him to carry on.

We must learn to encourage those who are strong and sound in the faith. We must also refuse to compromise with those who are diluting or denying the truth.

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